

From Various Sources: 3 Poems

RUBBER STAMPING OPERATIONS

From a letter to the *LRB* by Michael Horovitz

Poets and publications favoured?
Not that many poets and writers
are looking beyond prerequisites.

We are looking for back-stabbing,
the body and soul of the living word
in Britain today and tomorrow.

We serve to protect and promote
a narrow uniformity of transactions
by and for the ruling classes, keep down

almost every aspiration to the original,
adventuresome, radical, heterodox,
experimental and imaginative.

We flaunt tomorrow and insult makers
of poetry who preserve the power.
Poetry is made of irrational words:

the most fastidious word-musicians alive
keep people apart, promote ignorance
as well as laughably sparse verse.

We've managed to cast judgment
on an incomparably banal output
as well as the nation's Literature,

are definable as survivors of state-registered
junkie imprints, the Beat generation, censorship,
and a self-regarding and self-propagating élite.

Unfailing reappearances cannot exist
without public monies and endangered species,
real conviction and rubbish readings.

We've somehow managed with handouts,
humble sights and dumped publications.
No one reads us except those who write.

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HERE WE ARE AGAIN

for and from Peter Dent

After another vigorous month of negotiations
with a collapsing world, it appears all things
are coming to an end, as was prophesied.

The collapse of reality is not entirely unrelated
to the wobble of a jelly, but I regard anything
written down as an attempt to recover being.

Poems are like a stage with someone out front
explaining how we are all vibrations between
anything you can think of and everything else.

It's great if you don't weaken, but I am listening
to evergreen jazz and reading dozens of poets
who all become clearer by the page. I have not

personally collapsed but am well down that path
since falling and turning my head into a mess
of bruises, cuts and grazes. April is flying by,

for which I am grateful, as I've only just got
round to recent books I hadn't seen were coming.
One day soon there will be nothing more to write

or say: the whole world clapped out and broken,
only ruined syntax and post-apocalyptic scenery,
with me wrapped up in layers of being and ideas.

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AN AVERAGE DAY OF MISADVENTURES

for and from Stephen Middleton

Thank you for the two or three trains running;

they arrived today with a wait time of 90 minutes.

I briefly felt enthused and almost well enough
to contemplate actually doing stuff, seemed to

have started but bumped into my autobiography:
lots of long stories I'll regale you with some day.

The Manchester Ship Canal was used to prevent
local lasses being impregnated by Irish navvies.

I never went anywhere until I left and then came back
in order to raid bars and criminalise dancing,

unencumbered by ancient statutes. How they loved
my lecture on intercrural contact in that slug-infested place.

The surgery says 'we're having a problem with our post'
and I can't get to speak to my bebop-addicted students.

I live in sad circumstances, don't have a favourite policeman.
Good night. Good night. And thanks for sending the book.

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